



In January of 2004, I took a trip back home to Ethiopia after being gone for over 20 years. Since you've read or are reading my book, I thought you might like to see some of my pictures. This first photo is of some of my family in Adi Grat, a town in Tigray, the northern region of Ethiopia where I was born. My cousin is holding my book and my grandma and mom sit on either side of him.



We flew into Addis Ababa, the capital city. One of the first things I noticed was how densely populated Addis Ababa was – people were walking everywhere. Did you know that Ethiopia, with more than 70,000,000 people is the 2nd most populous country in Africa? Do you know what Africa's most populous country is?

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Growing up in the U.S., I always wondered what it would be like to have uncles, aunts, cousins, and other extended family. One of the trips biggest highlights was meeting people like my Uncle Abraha. (I like the meaning of his name: he who brought the light.)

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Many people think they'd never find a building as beautiful as this Sheraton Hotel in Ethiopia. This Sheraton is where visiting politicians and key business leaders stay when they come to Ethiopia and some rooms cost \$7000/night. Go to the next slide and you'll see how most people live 2 blocks away.

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Comparing this photo with the last photo highlights one of the world's most contentious problems: the widening gap between how poor and rich people live. Some people argue that as long as poor people today live better than poor people from past generations, that means everyone is making progress and we should be happy. What do you think? Is there a rising tide that is lifting all boats, and if it is lifting all boats, does that make the wealth gap less of a problem?



Can you read this sign? It's in Mekele, our first stop after Addis. In my book, Mekele is where my father went after he left Eritrea.

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We flew to Mekele, but we had to drive three hours on scary mountain roads to get to Adi Grat - where my grandma, aunts, and cousins live. In case you're wondering, this photo is not taken from a helicopter but from the passenger side window of the taxi-van we took. Many people die because their vehicle slips off the unpaved and narrow path and falls thousands of feet.

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Most people in Tigray don't have cars, so they walk most places. Can you figure out why the woman has an umbrella?

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When I got to Adi Grat, I met the person my mother had been telling me about for decades, the person I had most wanted to meet on my trip: my Grandma! (Chi-town, I apologize for the New York Hat – I don't know what I was thinking.)

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In honor of my our visit, my relatives slaughtered this lamb. I convinced the butcher to pause from his work to show off his handiwork.

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Here is my cousin Goitom with some cute kids from the hood. Goitom is the oldest guy in the picture, all the way in the back, in the middle.

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Adi Grat is located a stone's throw from Eritrea. Eritrea and Ethiopia fought another war between 1998 and 2000 that killed tens of thousands of people and forced hundreds of thousands to become refugees. After the war, the UN set up a camp next to Adi Grat, right in between the two countries. The only way the two countries can attack each other now is to first attack the UN. The next 2 slides feature top-secret photos I took of the UN camp from the perimeter. I'd have more but the soldiers threatened to take my camera.



These UN Soldiers from India practice artillery procedures.

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Here are some UN supply trucks. These trucks remind me of the lorry my family took from Umsagata to Gedarif.



Some teens in the U.S. like to show off Bling Bling, but here are my cousins actually making Bling Bling in their very own house! They know how to work silver and gold into rings, necklaces, and bracelets. (For those of you not with the program, Bling Bling means jewelry.)

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I lucked out on my trip and caught one of the biggest holidays in Ethiopia: Baptism. Baptism is not celebrated by Christians in the United States, but in Ethiopia, it's almost as big as Easter and Christmas. (Baptism celebrates the day that John the Baptist baptized Jesus.)



Every country loves to talk junk about how they defeated their enemies, vanquished their foes, etc. One of Ethiopia's greatest heroes is Ras Alula, a general who defeated the Italian colonizers in the 1880s. In the next slide, you can read the inscription below the statue. (This is outside of Mekele's airport.)

"THE ITALIANS SHOULD COME TO SAHATI
ONLY IF I COULD GO AS GOVERNOR TO ROME,
I HAVE BEATEN THEM ONCE, AND IF THEY ADVANCED
I WOULD BEAT THEM AGAIN"

RAS ALULA (ENGEDA) ABBA NEGGA

(1847 – 1897)

A NATIVE OF TEMBIEN (IN TEGRAY), RAS ALULA ABBA NEGGA WAS AN IMPASSIONED PATRIOT AND A RENOWNED GENERAL. THE RIGHT HAND MAN OF EMPEROR YOHANNES (R. 1871-1889) ALULA'S MILITARY EXPLOITS ARE ALMOST LEGENDARY. HE WAS THE ARCHITECT OF YOHANNES'S VICTORY AT THE BATTLE OF ASSEM, WHICH ENSURED HIS CORONATION AND THE BATTLES OF GUNDA AND GURA, WHICH DECISIVELY REVERSED EGYPTIAN EXPANSIONISM. APPOINTED IN 1876 GOVERNOR OF THE MARAB-MELLASH (PRESENT DAY ERITREA), TARGET OF REPEATED FOREIGN ENCROACHMENT, ALULA DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF BY THE FAIRNESS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION. THE POPULAR SAYING "AS SAINTLY AS LALIBALA, AS JUST AS ALULA" PAYS TRIBUTE TO THIS RECORD. WHEN, DESPITE HIS REMONSTRATIONS, THE ITALIANS CONTINUED THEIR ENCROACHMENT ON THE HIGHLANDS FROM THE PORT OF MASSAWA, WHICH THEY HAD ACQUIRED IN 1885 THROUGH THE GOOD OFFICES OF BRITAIN, ALULA DEALT ITALIAN IMPERIAL ASPIRATIONS A CRUSHING BLOW BY WIPING OUT AN ENTIRE FORCE AT DOGALI. FINALLY, AT THE HEAD OF THE TIGREAN CONTINGENT, ALULA PLAYED A PROMINENT ROLE IN THE RESOUNDING VICTORY THAT ETHIOPIAN FORCES SCORED AT ADWA ON 1 MARCH, 1896.



Have you ever heard of The Ark of the Covenant from the Bible? They say that it can be found in this building in Axum, Tigray.

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Of course, I had to test my countryman's basketball skills while I was there. I'm afraid that I have to give them a D-. On the other hand, they would give me an F- in soccer!

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This is a monastery in Tigray. I wonder if the monastery my father lived in as a kid looked anything like this. Would you like living in a monastery like this in Ethiopia? No? Well, don't worry, even if you lived there, you could still probably find some of what you'll see on the next page. Unfortunately, it's EVERYWHERE!



Thanks for watching! And thanks again for reading my book.

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